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HOW

to get it



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PAMPHLET

**BETTER HOUSING, HEALTH SERVICES
CHILD WELFARE, FULL RELIEF AND
OTHER COUNCIL SERVICES. A
PRACTICAL GUIDE TO YOUR RIGHTS**

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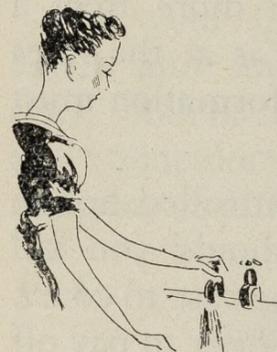
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This pamphlet talks of "your Council." Remember that there are several different sorts of Councils. Some of you who read this will live in a district governed by a Rural District Council, some in a district governed by an Urban District Council, and some in a district governed by a County Borough Council. If you live in a Rural District, an Urban District or a Borough, you have a County Council as well, which is responsible for some of the services mentioned in this pamphlet. But your District Council pays part of your rates to the County Council, so make it hammer at the County Council to get value for your district.

Throughout this pamphlet, your Council's headquarters have been called the Council offices. These may be known as the Municipal Offices or the Town Hall.

Presented by CPGB
April 1995



WHEN YOU TURN ON THE WATER TAP AT HOME

You expect to have running water for your use. You don't feel specially grateful for it, and you certainly don't look upon it as charity. You know, of course, that you have paid for it in the Water Rate, for even if you don't pay rates separately, you pay them in your rent. In other words, you have a right to the water.

There are other important services you pay for in the Council Rates which you have the same right to use, but many people don't quite know what they do pay for, nor how to find out. This pamphlet, while it cannot tell you all that your rates buy, will give you some idea of what services you have a right to expect, and how you and your neighbours can get them.

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YOUR HOUSE

“WHAT RENT CAN THE LANDLORD CHARGE?”



Find out if your house is “controlled” or “decontrolled.” Ask at the Council Offices (see front page footnote), where a register of decontrolled houses must be kept. If your house is not on the register, it is still controlled, and then you cannot be charged more than a certain rent. You can find out what this is at the rates department of the Council Offices. **The information must be given if you ask for it.**

You have other rights as tenant of a controlled house. The landlord cannot put the bailiffs in should you fall behind with your rent, but he must take the case to court. There you can state your case and make an offer to pay off the arrears. Nor can he turn you out as he chooses without providing another suitable place.

Decontrolled tenants are not protected in these ways. Recently, however, Tenants' Leagues have been formed all over the country—which have been able to get rents lowered for both controlled and decontrolled houses.

“WHAT ABOUT REPAIRS?”

Rent is not the only problem. Your house may be insanitary, or in bad repair. Report this to the sanitary inspector at the Council Offices. If you are a controlled tenant, he may give you a certificate (costing 1/-), which

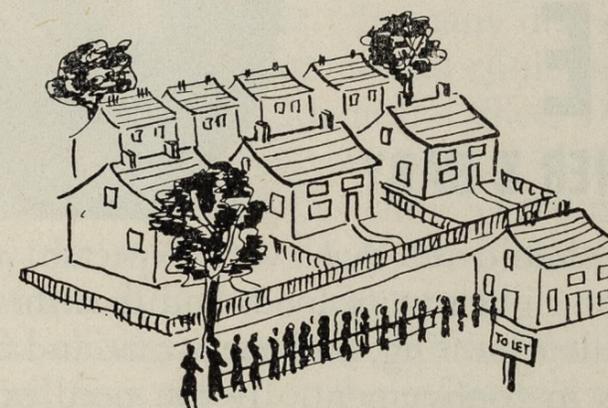
allows you to pay only a part of your rent until the landlord has carried out repairs properly.

Whether you are a controlled or a decontrolled tenant, the Council may **ORDER** the landlord to do the necessary repairs. Should he fail, the Council can have them done and make him pay.



“PHEW WHAT A STINK!”

Has your Council made by-laws against the rotten smells and smoke from factory chimneys? See that it does. Join or start a Tenants' League, and make landlords and councillors carry out all these laws which aim to protect your health.



“CAN I GET A COUNCIL HOUSE?”

Councils have power to build houses for workers and can get Government grants to build them for overcrowded families or to replace slums, although the National Government has cut as much as it dare of the Labour Government scheme. If you want to apply for a Council

House, go to the Council Offices. Worry the Council for more and cheaper houses.

"THE DUSTBIN'S FULL AGAIN"

The Council may, if it decides to do so, provide dustbins. It **must** see that they are provided either by you or the landlord, and that refuse is regularly collected. In one borough in London the refuse department collects twice a week in the wealthy quarter with good carts and once a week in the poor quarter with old carts. Don't stand for this. You can insist on rubbish being collected often enough to keep it from littering up your back-yard.

YOUR BABY SPECIAL CARE FOR MOTHER & BABY



A council should see that every expectant mother has enough of the right sort of food, and that she has skilled attention while expecting, and every care and comfortable surroundings in confinement. If you need extra food or dental treatment, either before or after baby is born, you should be able to get them through the Council's Maternity and Child Welfare Clinic, either free or at reduced cost.

Where there is no clinic, the Public Assistance Committee can supply them if their doctor says they are necessary. Milk for baby can be obtained in the same way.

Visitors, nurses and doctors attend the clinics, give advice on baby welfare and keep an eye on baby's progress. Many clinics are run in old, draughty buildings, and mothers often have to wait a long time for their turns. **Badger your councils until you get properly designed modern clinics, with enough staff to do the job properly.** Going early to a clinic for advice may make all the difference in giving baby a good start in life.

"I'D LIKE TO BE AT HOME"

If you are having the baby at home, you must decide whether you will engage a doctor or make a midwife entirely responsible. If you put yourself under a doctor, you must pay his fees, and have a midwife, too, as a maternity nurse.

If you decide to have a midwife only, book one as quickly as possible. All midwives are now under the control of the Council. If you do not know of one, you can get names and addresses from the Medical Officer of Health at the Council Offices. In many districts the midwives are engaged through ante-natal clinics set up by the Council. Here again the Medical Officer's department will give you the address of your nearest clinic. The expectant mother can attend the clinic every month to be examined by the midwife. A Council doctor is also in attendance at the clinic for consultation.

Fares to the clinic can be paid by the Council.

The Council fixes a fee for the midwife's services, and you can pay this by instalments. **The Council can pay the whole or part of the fee if you cannot afford it.**

Very often the expectant mother goes short of that extra food she needs in trying to keep up the payments. **If this is so, she should apply for the charge to be cancelled or reduced.**

If the midwife suspects anything unusual in the case at

any time, she must call in a doctor. The Council will pay the doctor's fees (and even specialists' fees, if necessary), but they can make you pay back the whole or part of the amount afterwards. If you haven't the means you cannot be made to pay.

"CAN I GO INTO HOSPITAL?"

If you want to have your baby in hospital, you should book your bed early. Councils have the power to run their own maternity hospitals, and many general hospitals have good maternity wards. The charge for treatment in hospital has to be based on a means test that varies from place to place. The Labour London County Council is more reasonable than most councils.

"WHO'LL LOOK AFTER THE HOME WHILE I'M IN BED?"



The Council can pay a woman to help run the home while the mother is being confined, recovering part or all of the cost from the family. Where there are not the means, the Council can provide the help free.

Enquire from the clinic or your midwife whether home helps are available in your district. If they are not, worry your councillors till they are.

"WHAT ARE DAY NURSERIES AND NURSERY SCHOOLS?"

A few councils have provided day nurseries where the babies of mothers who are out at work can be left from about 7.30 in the morning till 6.30 at night in the care of properly trained nurses. A charge of from 6d. to 1/- a

day is usually made, and this includes three meals a day. If you get together and organise a day nursery yourselves, fight hard and get the grant that the Council can give towards it.



When your baby is about two years old, he needs the society of other children and plenty of play in the open air. A good nursery school is the ideal place.

Councils have been very backward in setting up nursery schools. But where mothers of a district have shown themselves determined and have organised petitions, demonstrations and deputations to the Council, it has been forced to get on with the job.

"WHAT ARE YOUR SCHOOLS LIKE?"

Big improvements in school services would be made if parents got together to demand better conditions for their children. Large numbers of schools have been black-listed for many years, but nothing is done about them. Washing and lavatory accommodation are bad, and children have to sit in damp clothes for several hours because there is nowhere to dry them.

Schools in some areas are well-staffed with fully-trained certificated teachers. In others, the classes are far too large for the teachers to do their work properly. Find out what your schools are like, and if they are bad, set to work to get them improved. Where you can, get a Parents' and Teachers' Association to help with this.

COLD AND HUNGRY CHILDREN CANNOT LEARN!

The Council has power to provide meals free or at reduced prices for school children who cannot take full advantage of the education provided owing to lack of food. Also, elementary school children may now have a third of a pint of milk a day at the cost of a halfpenny, or free if the school doctor recommends this.

Some councils wait for children to show signs of ill-health before giving free meals or milk. Others allow meals to all children whose parents' income is below an agreed figure. Of course, it is impossible for such parents to give enough nourishing food to their children. Don't forget that the Council can provide the meals during holidays and on Saturdays and Sundays. Set to work to raise the income limit, and see that no child in your area needs food.

USE THE SCHOOL CLINIC

A good school clinic can often save your child from a bad illness by treating a small defect in time. Examination by the doctor is free and you can be there when your child is examined. If treatment, glasses, etc., are wanted, you will be charged according to your income.

"FARES, PLEASE!"

If you live a long way from the school, fares can be paid by the Council or a school bus provided, but in many districts parents have had to organise school strikes to make the Council do this.

WHEN YOUR CHILD LEAVES SCHOOL

After September 1st, 1939, children must stay at school until they are 15 years of age, unless the Council gives permission to take work at 14. Before giving permission, the

Council must make certain that the wages, hours and surroundings are suitable, that there are prospects in the job, that there will be enough leisure and time to study, and that all these conditions are kept up. Complaints should be made to the Clerk of the Council or the Director of Education at the Council Offices.

The boy or girl leaving school can get advice or help in finding a job from a Juvenile Employment Bureau, or a Ministry of Labour special office working under a Juvenile Advisory Committee. Workers' organisations have members on it, so ask their help to see that your boy or girl is offered a job with decent prospects and conditions.

A new Act this year protects boys and girls under 18 in certain jobs (particularly messengers, page-boys, etc.) from working more than 48 hours a week. It also arranges about meal-times and half-holidays and forbids night-work. The Council has to see that this Act is not broken. Ask for information at the Council Offices.

IF YOU FALL OUT OF WORK

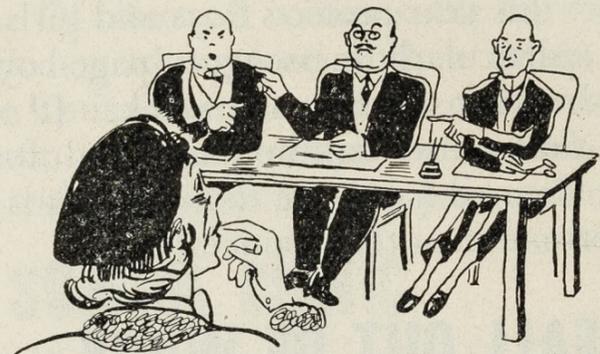
There are three ways in which unemployment allowances are paid. The Employment Exchange, the Unemployment Assistance Board (both run by the Government), and through the Public Assistance Committee of the Council.

If you fall out of work, you should immediately sign on at the Employment Exchange, making a Claim for Unemployment Insurance Benefit. If your benefit has run out, or it is not sufficient to meet the needs of your family, or if you are waiting to hear the result of a claim, you can apply to the Unemployment Assistance Board for an allowance. The allowance is calculated according to scale, and a means test is applied, the whole of the family income being taken into account.

The officer of the Unemployment Assistance Board has

power to grant additional allowances where there is special need (such as sickness in the family), and for clothing, bedding, furniture hire-purchase instalments and household replacements. You have to make a special application for this, and you will find out that you have to press for your rights, as the Board will not give you over-much information.

Where there is any delay in obtaining unemployment benefit or from the Unemployment Assistance Board, apply to the Public Assistance Committee of the Council through the Relieving Officer, who must give temporary relief if there is urgent need.



The Employment Exchange, the Unemployment Assistance Board and the Public Assistance Committee are always trying to shuffle off the responsibility for payments from one to another, and if you do not know your rights you may suffer severe hardship as a result.

You can get help and advice from your Trade Union, or by joining the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. The "Daily Worker" also gives advice on unemployment problems.

You can also get useful hints in the "DAILY WORKER" on economical cooking, easier housework, money-saving dress-making ideas, and an inexpensive pattern service. Nurse Jane Geddes advises mothers about child welfare, Aline O'Neil provides invaluable beauty hints, and a host of other contributors, make the Home Page (published on Tuesdays and Fridays) most eagerly sought for by working women. Order the "DAILY WORKER" from your newsagent, or in case of difficulty, write to "DAILY WORKER," Cayton Place, London, E.C.1.

YOUR COUNCIL AND UNEMPLOYMENT

While the responsibility for unemployment rests, in the first place, with the Government, the Council has its part to play.

If you are not entitled either to Unemployment Insurance Benefit or Unemployment Assistance (this does happen in some cases), you can still obtain relief from the Public Assistance Committee. This makes its own scale of allowances, so work to get these scales improved.

The Council can also grant the use of baths, wash-houses, allotments, playing pitches, etc., at reduced charges to unemployed.

It can help to provide work. In every area, houses, schools, better roads, hospitals, and clinics, deep air-raid shelters are needed and would give work at trade union rates to thousands.

Find out all your local needs and urge, by deputations to your Council, that work be put in hand at once.

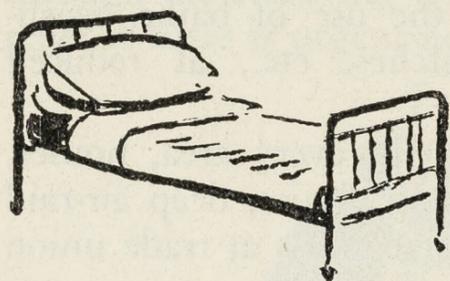
IF YOU ARE SICK

AT HOME

Members of your family who pay National Health Insurance can obtain free treatment from their panel doctor. The Council, through the Public Assistance Committee, must provide free doctoring for others who cannot afford to pay for it, through the Relieving Officer.

Special food, surgical appliances, spectacles, dentures may be granted by the Public Assistance Committee if the doctor says they are necessary, and the patient is unable to afford them. The Public Assistance Committee must also give an allowance to the sick person or his family if the family income is low.

If you are sick as a result of an accident, and there is a possibility that you may be able to claim damages or compensation, this allowance is often granted "on loan." The loan can only be recovered if you have signed an agreement to repay. Do not sign an agreement of this kind until you have asked advice from your Trade Union or some other working-class organisation, which will make sure that you are getting fair treatment.



IN HOSPITAL

Councils may provide hospitals for treatment of the sick, including isolation hospitals, general hospitals, and convalescent homes, but like other services, some are good and some are bad.

The Council may charge the patient, or any person "legally liable to maintain him," for the whole or part of the cost of his stay in hospital. A man is "legally liable" to the Council for the hospital treatment of his wife and dependent children. You should seek advice from working-class bodies if you are called upon to pay for treatment of any other relative, since a number of unsettled legal points arise in this matter.

The Council is allowed to give free hospital and ambulance service for infectious diseases, and the ambulance service is also free for cases of accident or sudden illness which occur within the Council's area. If the ambulance has to go outside the boundaries, a charge is usually made.

HOW TO GET BETTER HOSPITALS

It is a mistake to believe that you have to put up with bad conditions of any kind. If you are dissatisfied with the hospital treatment in your district, start organising to get better hospitals. If you are kept waiting too long in an out-patients' ward, get a piece of paper, write out a protest and collect signatures on the spot.

Bermondsey's new Public Health Centre in London is an example of what can be done by a really progressive Labour Council.

The building contains a fine solarium, infant welfare centre and ante-natal clinics, foot clinics, a consultation clinic for children, a tuberculosis dispensary, gynaecological clinics, a dental surgery, X-ray department, a clinic for the prevention of diphtheria, and a laboratory for the Public Analyst. The Council has also a convalescent home in the country for expectant and nursing mothers who need a change of air.

This pamphlet only describes some of your Council services. There are others, such as baths, wash-houses, parks, playing-fields and libraries, and these, too, will only be as good as they ought to be if you see to it that your councillors do their work properly.

WHAT TO DO

The Communist Party in any area will help you to go the right way to work to get things done. Get in touch with the people who sell this pamphlet, and they will let you have the benefit of experiences gained in many struggles all over the country.

You have probably read of the tenants' campaigns in Birmingham and London, where Communist men and women started organising tenants in successful action against the landlords. Communist women in Manchester started a campaign that improved the scales for giving free milk and meals to undernourished children.

These and many other experiences prove that united effort can get not only the utmost from the present laws, but can compel the making of new laws to give a better standard of life to the workers.

If you want to know more about our work, so that you can help, write to The Communist Party, 16, King Street, Covent Garden, London, W.C.2.

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